

Guidelines for Honors Advising for the Psychology, Cognitive Science, and Cognitive Neuroscience Concentrations

CoPsy Department

2026-2027 Academic Year

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Thank you for considering mentoring an honors thesis student in the CoPsy Department in the Psychology, Cognitive Science, or Cognitive Neuroscience concentration. We truly appreciate your willingness to let a student work side by side with you in a research endeavor. We hope that the experience is beneficial not only to the student, but also to your research and membership in the Brown community. Below we want to describe a set of practices that we hope you will consider while mentoring a student through the honors process. Please note that below we refer to “sponsors” as indicating the faculty member who is responsible for the student’s training and evaluation.

Please note that many of these guidelines are relevant for students in the Behavioral Decision Science Concentration as well, particularly for sponsors outside of the CPSY department. However, we encourage you to discuss specific matters related to the advising of BDS students with the BDS concentration advisor, David Levari (David_Levari@brown.edu).

Sincerely,

Honors Advisor (Dave Sobel, Dave_Sobel@brown.edu)

Director of Undergraduate Studies (Andrea Simmons, Andrea_Simmons@brown.edu)

CoPsy Department, Brown University

Note

Prof. Sobel has more to say about the honors program on his Blog (<https://sites.google.com/brown.edu/clpsadvising/home>). Sponsors should be aware that students consult this blog regarding the honors program and other advising matters in the CPSY department (Entries under the CPSY Honors program are particularly relevant).

Overview

Faculty thesis sponsors are responsible for supervising the student to ensure the student logs 180 hours of instructional time per semester. Regular meetings with the student are essential to discuss the literature review and theoretical motivation for the research the student is conducting, operationalization and experimental design (where necessary), data collection, analysis or modeling (where relevant), and general research progress. Please note that students are required to have synchronous meetings (in person or over Zoom) with their sponsor several times per

semester. We strongly recommend meeting with your student weekly in a one-on-one setting. We also strongly recommend the student attending your laboratory or research group meeting, if you hold one.

Faculty sponsors should set specific benchmarks for research activities, including deadlines for drafts, data collection, and lab presentations, and establish end-of-semester benchmarks, such as a draft of the introduction and research progress. Please remember that a draft of the introduction of the thesis is due at the end of the Fall semester (for AY 2026-2027, on December 16). Students who do not submit a draft by this deadline will not be allowed to continue in the honors program in the Spring.

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Sponsor to ensure that the student has also completed necessary training in research required by the university or for any grant-related activities (e.g., the CITI course). It is also the responsibility of the Faculty Sponsor to obtain the relevant IRB/IACUC approval for the thesis project.

Faculty sponsors must review and provide feedback on the rough draft of the thesis, the penultimate draft, and the final written thesis, as well as oversee the creation and timely submission of the student's poster presentation. We strongly recommend that faculty set time aside at the end of the Fall semester to provide students with this feedback or to ensure that students have this feedback by the first day of the spring semester. Finally, faculty sponsors should discuss authorship for any published papers resulting from the project to ensure clarity and proper credit for the student's contributions.

Specific Information and Guidelines

- 1) Honors students must register for CPSY1980 in their 7th and 8th semesters. Sponsors must have a section of CPSY1980 so that the student can register during the shopping period. If the sponsor does not already have a section number, they will be given one automatically when the student's honors proposal is accepted. If there is any difficulty with this process, please contact Rosa Moniz, our undergraduate administrative staff person.
- 2) CPSY1980 is a formal course. As such, students are expected to engage in 180 hours of instructional time over the course of the semester. This roughly translates to students putting in 13-14 hours per week engaging in research activities, including meeting with the Sponsor. Students should keep a log of their hours. We recommend that students take CLPS1980 ABC/NC.
- 3) CPSY1980 can be used as an elective, capstone, or 2nd lab STEM course for Sc.B. concentrators in Psychology, Cognitive Science, or Cognitive Neuroscience. However, only two semesters of CPSY1980 credit can be applied to concentration requirements. Please have students speak with their concentration advisor to ensure that *the two required semesters* of CPSY1980 in the 7th and 8th semesters fit into their

concentration declaration.

- 4) The honors experience involves a set of deliverables (exact dates posted on the honors website).
 - a) At the end of the first semester, a rough draft of a portion of the thesis (e.g., the introduction and possibly the methods) is submitted to the faculty sponsor and the honors advisor.
 - b) In early April, a penultimate draft of the thesis is submitted to the faculty sponsor, the second faculty reader, and the Honors advisor.
 - c) In mid-to-late April, a poster will be presented to the CoPsy Department at an event for all honors students.
 - d) The final written honors thesis, due in (late April)

More information about these deliverables are listed in #5 and #6

- 5) The poster should be the equivalent of a poster that would be presented at an academic conference. Details about the size/format will be provided to students sometime in the spring semester. Students will have access to the CoPsy department poster printer in order to print the poster in the week leading up to the event. Students should be made aware that their poster is due ~3-4 days before the event, not the day of the event. This will ensure that all posters are printed and hung in a timely manner.
- 6) The final written report should be written in the form of a manuscript, written for a standard APA journal in the sponsor's field, and written in APA style. It should be divided into an Introduction section, Methods and Results for each experiment and a discussion section. If there are multiple experiments, then the student should have separate discussion sections for each experiment as well as a general discussion. We strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the APA publication manual (7th edition) and advise the student to do the same.

Students will often ask about the length of the written report, particularly the introduction. Although we do not have specific page length requirements (because every research project is different), there is an expectation that the introduction details a year-long investigation and a relatively large set of reading. Thus, it should be substantial, with the aim of teaching the reader about the topic and motivation for the research. An introduction of a thesis, thus, should be longer than a standard introduction for a manuscript, and presents the details of more individual papers. A short introduction, appropriate for a conference submission or even a full-length journal article, is not sufficient.

About a month prior to the due date of the written report, a full rough draft of the report must be submitted by the student to the honors advisor, the student's research advisor and a second reader. The second reader will always be a member of the CoPsy department, and is determined for each student when they apply for honors. The second reader will provide feedback on the draft, for the student to revise the project. The primary research advisor (sponsor) should do this as well. This feedback should be

treated as if the student is being given a revise-and-resubmit from a journal, although a point-by-point description of the revisions (i.e., a cover letter) is *not* necessary.

Individual dates for the poster session, the submission of the penultimate draft, and the submission of the final draft change year to year. For this year, they can be found on the honors website of the CoPsy department.

7) In preparation of these final deliverables:

- a) We recommend that the student prepares a reading list of approximately 20-60 sources early in the first semester, which should be reviewed and approved by the faculty sponsor. Most of this reading is to be done during the first semester and the intersession. This reading will serve as the backbone of the introduction and motivation for the project, and should be summarized in the draft of the introduction that is submitted at the end of the Fall semester, and is revised in the Spring.
- b) Although a minimal number of meetings between student and sponsor are required, in both the Fall and the Spring semester, we recommend that the sponsor and the student meet **weekly** to discuss the thesis experience as if the CPSY1980 had a class session. Although we recognize that advanced graduate students and postdoctoral researchers might be involved with the project, these individuals should not take the place of the faculty sponsor. Please note that staff members are never allowed to be involved in the supervision of an honors project, and graduate students who have not yet advanced to candidacy are strongly discouraged from working with honors students. Any concerns with the student's progress in the honors program will be brought to the attention of the faculty sponsor, not graduate students or postdoctoral researchers.
- c) We recommend that the sponsor sets particular benchmarks for research activities. This could include, but is not limited to (i) setting due dates for drafts of parts of the written report, (ii) setting deadlines for data collection or analysis, (iii) presentation in lab meetings or other gatherings by the student detailing the project, or (iv) the student submitting laboratory notes taken throughout the semester. Even if benchmarks are not set regularly, we strongly encourage sponsors to set benchmarks for specifically the end of the first semester (e.g., a draft of the introduction as well as research progress).
- d) The sponsor must ensure that the student has received relevant training (e.g., CITI, ethics in psychology, etc.) and the sponsor must obtain relevant IRB or IACUC approval. This should be done within the first two weeks of the start of the first semester. Such approvals can take weeks or even months to obtain, so starting before the semester begins is usually necessary.
- e) If relevant, a discussion about authorship of any published paper that might emerge

from the project. We encourage all sponsors to read the section on Publication Practices and Responsible Authorship at <https://www.apa.org/research/responsible/publication>

8) We hope that the experience is a positive one for both the student and the sponsor, and can ultimately result in conference presentations, journal articles, and a successful mentoring relationship. However, in the unfortunate event of conflict arising between a student and sponsor in the course of the process, we encourage both individuals to contact first the honors advisor (Dave_Sobel@brown.edu) as well as the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Andrea_Simmons@brown.edu)